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THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK.

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SO MUCH attention has been directed to this little book during the past few years that it may seem almost presumptuous for anyone to suggest another interpretation. But in view of the facts that none of the views propounded have won general assent, and that resort has constantly been had to the doubtful expedient of more or less radical rearrangements of the text, it is worth while to make another attempt to ascertain the date and occasion of this prophecy.

We shall consider in the first instance the first and second chapters of the book, or more closely chaps. 1:2—2:5, for it is in this passage only that definite indications of the date and circumstances are to be found. This piece falls into two sections, viz., 1:2—11 and 1:12—2:5. In the first section the prophet complains of a condition of affairs in which oppression, strife, and violence are prevalent, and in which justice and law are powerless.¹ This condition is due to the fact that the wicked hold the righteous in subjection. To this complaint the prophet receives an answer which takes the form of a command addressed to him and to his associates, declaring that release from the present intolerable condition is to be secured through the intervention of the Chaldeans.² It is stated that, though this promise may seem incredible, it is nevertheless true, and then the

¹ The *torah* in vs. 3, in parallelism with *mishpat*, "justice, right," must refer to moral and social order. Without the article, it is certainly not "Deuteronomy," as BUDDE, *Ency. Bib.*, article "Habakkuk," col. 1294, and DAVIDSON, *Camb. Bible*, p. 67, hold.

² Many recent authorities would read בְּגֵרִים for בְּגֵרִים in vs. 5, in which case we have a warning addressed to the oppressors. This reading is attractive, especially as in this way we should have another use of בְּגֵר, but inasmuch, as elsewhere in the prophecy, the answer to prayer and complaint comes to the prophet himself, it seems best to retain the traditional text.

future victorious career of the Chaldeans is described in vivid, but more or less general terms. This description reaches its climax in the assertion in vs. 11 that the result of the onset of the Chaldeans will be the overthrow and utter destruction of the proud oppressor who deifies his own strength. This furnishes a simple and natural interpretation for vs. 11, whatever view we may take as to the identity of the oppressor, and is absolutely essential to Budde's view that the oppressor is the Assyrian, as he has himself seen in his latest discussions of the subject.³ It is probable that, with Wellhausen and Budde, we should read *יחלף*, and for *ואפס ואשם* seems better than Wellhausen's *וישם* or Budde's *אשור*. The verse would then be translated: "Then shall this one whose strength is his god pass away like the wind and vanish and become naught."⁴

The second section of the prophecy begins with 1:12 and extends through 2:5. While it has a character and a point of view of its own, still it is parallel to the first section. The oppressor is the same, for he deifies his own power (vs. 16). We have in vs. 13 the same opposition of the wicked and the righteous which we have met in vs. 4, and the prophet inquires whether this state of affairs is to continue forever, much as he has complained in vs. 2.⁵ In this section, however, appeal is made to the holiness and justice of Jehovah, and especially to his relation to the righteous complainant: He is "my holy one." It is claimed that the oppressor owes his existence and his power to Jehovah, "who has appointed him for judgment and ordained him for reproof" (vs. 12), but he has far exceeded his commission, and the prophet argues that Jehovah cannot allow him to continue on his career of cruelty and conquest. There-

³ *Expositor*, Fifth Series, Vol. I, p. 376, note 1; *Ency. Bib.*, *loc. cit.*, note 3.

⁴ The very change in construction produced by the introduction of the particle *אז* naturally suggests the change in subject. For parallels to the interpretation suggested for *חלה* and *עבר*, see for *חלה* Isa. 2:18; Ps. 90:5; Cant. 2:11 where *חלה* and *עבר* are connected as they are here; for *עבר* Jer. 8:20; Amos 8:5.

⁵ Read probably with Giesebrecht *העולם* in vs. 17. The objection of STEVENSON, *Expositor*, May, 1902, p. 391, note 1, that this change imports an element of complaint into the section is justified only on his theory that vss. 12 and 13 do not belong in this section. As they stand vss. 13-15 certainly contain clearly enough the element of complaint.

fore he determines to await an answer to his complaint. And just as in the first section the answer did not fail, so here the answer is not lacking, and incredible though it seems, and delayed though it may be in being fulfilled, yet it is a certain and inalienable promise of release.

This answer differs from that given in the first section in that without any indication of the means by which it is to be accomplished, the declaration is made that "the righteous shall live by or through his faithfulness, while the wicked, treacherous oppressor shall come to naught." The interpretation of the closing words of this section is of necessity doubtful on account of the condition of the text in vss. 4 and 5. Wellhausen's suggestion that in vs. 4 we should read, "Behold the wicked, not sure is his soul within him," is on the whole the most probable emendation. In vs. 5 we may with some confidence read, with Bredenkamp, Giesebrecht, and Budde, *וְאִפְסָ כֹּחַ*, and probably with Wellhausen and Budde *יִרְוֶה* for *יִנְוֶה* and translate, "Then the treacherous, insatiate, haughty one shall become naught and cease to be," affording a striking parallel to the closing words of sec. 1 in 1:11. The second half of vs. 5 introduces a new element by indicating that the oppressor of the preceding verses has not only mistreated the righteous, but has also been tyrannical to other peoples as well. This thought marks the transition to the third and last section, the concluding portion of the second chapter, to which we must now direct our attention briefly. This section consists of a taunt-song which is put into the mouth of the victims of the oppressor as they see him compelled to drink the cup of Jehovah's vengeance. The crimes of the oppressor are in the main those mentioned in the second section, cruelty and inhumanity, which are described as being extended even to the cattle and, strangely enough, to the forest of Lebanon, and the religious element, described in both the first and second sections as deification of his own strength, is here treated as idolatry, the worship of the works of his own hands. That this song is substantially genuine is practically certain, though it is probable that it has been worked over and possibly enlarged by interpolation. But that is a question apart from the

main purpose of this paper. And if the substantial genuineness of the song as a whole is granted, our argument will not be affected by the answer which may be given to these matters of detail.

Having thus outlined the general course of thought, it is time to turn to the consideration of particular points. If our interpretation is correct, there can no longer be any question as to the significance of the Chaldeans. They cannot be regarded as in any sense the subject or occasion of the prophecy; they are simply the instruments in Jehovah's hands for the accomplishment of his purpose, the overthrow of the oppressor, the release of his righteous ones, and ultimately the rescue of all the nations whom the oppressor has enslaved. The Chaldeans, whose conquests lie still in the future, are not, it is true, the instruments whom man would naturally have chosen to perform such a mighty work, for mere human foresight is unwilling to accept the statement; but, for all that, they are Jehovah's instruments.

This interpretation enables us also to form a pretty clear picture of the oppressor. Called sometimes the "wicked," sometimes the "treacherous one," he is the same in all sections of the prophecy. His presence subverts the whole normal order of society. The words in 1:2-4 furnish a remarkably vivid and apt description of a state of society in which the ordinary course of affairs, the regular operation of law and justice, are interrupted through the arbitrary and oppressive interference of some external power. Chaps. 1:14, 15, and 2:5, 6, 11, give further details of this interference. The tyranny is by no means confined to Judah, but is felt by many nations. It is everywhere characterized by an utter disregard of the rights of men and of communities. The oppressors treat men like the fish of the sea, like so many unorganized hordes, to be moved hither and thither as policy or mere caprice may dictate, without reference to the simplest requirements of humanity. Who is this oppressor? We have already seen that he cannot be the Chaldean. It is equally impossible to hold that the reference is to a class in Jewish society. The vividness of the description and the passion of the denunciation render it impossible to suppose that the

Egyptian power is meant—an alternative which is suggested by George Adam Smith.⁶ By a simple process of exclusion we are shut up to one power, and one only, whose rule and cruelty could be described in the words of our prophet; and that one is Assyria. In this Budde is unquestionably right. The only serious objection to this interpretation is that Assyria is nowhere named in the prophecy itself. But this objection is by no means valid, for the description of the tyrant is such as to show that his presence was so definitely and vividly felt by the prophet, at least, and, as will be shown later, in all probability by the whole people, that there was no need of naming him. The whole body politic was quivering under the oppressor's lash; he needs no name; it is enough to say: "This one whose strength is his God."

Barring textual corruptions and a few probable interpolations, especially in the last section, we find that chaps. 1 and 2 of the prophecy of Habakkuk are a literary and artistic unity dealing with the immanent discomfiture of the Assyrian oppressor and the deliverance of the people of Jehovah and all other peoples whom the Assyrian has subjugated. Nor is it necessary to assume, as Budde has done, that 1:5-11 originally stood after 2:4. To make the description culminate in the glorification of any human power is to distort the picture and to misinterpret the religious philosophy of the prophet. His prediction of the overthrow of the tyrant is based upon his conception of the justice and righteousness of Jehovah, and upon a revelation that in this specific case, as in all others, right must ultimately triumph and wrong must be overthrown, and therefore steadfast adherence to Jehovah furnishes the only sure and unassailable defense. The human agency is not ignored, but it is properly given a subordinate place, and is introduced early so that it may not detract from the force of the conception of Jehovah's justice and power with which the prophecy culminates. And, further, it is introduced in such a way as to emphasize the truth that Jehovah can accomplish his work by unexpected and unusual means.

But the historical interpretation of prophecy demands that

⁶ *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. II, pp. 123, 124.

we find an occasion for the origin of our prophecy as we interpret it. Recognition of this principle is indispensable to sound criticism, and the failure to recognize it is largely responsible for much of the subjective literary criticism of the present day, which seems to regard the prophetic books as a congeries of fragments which the critic is at liberty to rearrange in any way he chooses, so long as the pieces which he produces make sense. In this case, therefore, in order to complete our task we are under obligation to seek for the circumstances in which our prophecy originated. And it is just here that our theory differs most decidedly from any of its predecessors. On our view of the direction of the prophecy against the Assyrians and of its attitude toward the Chaldeans, it is impossible to suppose that it could have originated at any time within the last quarter of the seventh century B. C. This is the weak point in Budde's theory. While giving him all honor for his brilliant discovery that the prophecy is directed against the Assyrians, yet we feel that he was too much influenced by the traditional placing of the book at the close of the seventh century to draw the necessary inference from his theory and seek a satisfactory occasion for the prophecy. This occasion, as we have already said, cannot be found after 626, for it is a sheer impossibility that the prediction with regard to the Chaldeans could have been made after Nabopolassar had definitely established himself as king of Babylon and had begun to reach out for his share in the heritage of the disintegrating Assyrian empire.⁷ This objection, which is decisive against Budde's view, is also fatal to the more popular view that the prophecy is directed in part at least, against the Chaldeans and that it originated after Carchemish. It is not enough to say, with Davidson,⁸ that "I : 5-11 is not a prophecy of the raising up of the Chaldeans except in form. It is a reference to the past, an explanation merely of their presence and meaning as instruments of Jehovah." This interpretation does such violence to the language of the prophet that it may be adopted only when all other

⁷ WINCKLER in SCHRADER'S *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*³ (= *K. A. T.*), pp. 104, 105.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

resources fail. If the prophecy is directed against the Chaldeans, then there is no escape from the conclusion of Giesebrecht⁹ and Wellhausen¹⁰ that the passage 1: 5-11 is misplaced, and, whether from the same author or not, belongs in point of time before vss. 2-4. Again, the description of the Chaldean conquests in vss. 5-10, while regarded by some as so realistic as to favor the later date, in reality applies to the movements of a semi-barbaric horde filled with the lust of conquest, far better than to the orderly advance of the disciplined armies of Nebuchadnezzar or of his father Nabopolassar.¹¹ But even more serious, as against Budde's theory, is the description of the Assyrians throughout the prophecy. It seems almost incredible that anyone could employ such language with regard to them in the last quarter of the seventh century. It is true that we are not very fully informed with regard to the closing years of the Assyrian empire, but thus much seems certain, that during the later years of the reign of Asshurbanipal, and more especially after his death in 626, Assyria was fully occupied in defending herself from outside attacks, and we have no evidence that she interfered in the remoter parts of the empire. In fact, it seems most probable that Josiah was practically independent during the latter half of his reign, and that Judah was left to manage her internal affairs very much as she chose.¹²

We are forced, therefore, to go farther back in the history to find the date and occasion of our prophecy. At first thought

⁹ *Beiträge zur Jesaiakritik*, pp. 197 f.

¹⁰ *Die kleinen Propheten*, p. 162.

¹¹ This objection appeals so strongly to WINCKLER (*Geschichte Israels*, Vol. I, pp. 185, 186) that he suggests that the passage in question is an independent fragment referring to the Scythians.

¹² W. M. MÜLLER, *Ency. Bib.*, Vol. II, col. 1246, note 2, and more fully in *Mittheilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 1898, p. 163, and WINCKLER, *K. A. T.*³, p. 105, are of the opinion that Josiah fought at Megiddo as a vassal of Assyria. But at the most it was only a nominal vassalage. It seems, however, more likely that he fought either alone or in connection with other Palestinian princes to prevent another foreign power from getting a foothold in Palestine; see GUTHE, *Ency. Bib.*, Vol. II, col. 2247; CHEYNE, *ibid.*, col. 2611; PEAKE, in HASTINGS'S *Dict. Bib.*, Vol. II, p. 789; MCCURDY, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, Vol. III, pp. 210-16; DUFF, *Theology and Ethics of the Hebrews*, pp. 152, 153.

one might be tempted to place the prophecy in connection with the rebellion against Asshurbanipal which was organized by his brother Shamash-shum-ukin, who had been established by his father as regent of Babylon under the suzerainty of Assyria. This rebellion began about 652, and continued for some years before it was finally crushed. It is highly probable that Judah and other Palestinian states shared in this rebellion and also in the punishment which followed. Against placing the prophecy of Habakkuk at this time, however, two decisive reasons may be urged. The first is that, in view of the unqualified condemnation of Manasseh and his reign on the part of the prophets, it is impossible to believe that a prophet could have referred to the Judean state at that time as even relatively righteous. The second reason against this date is that the Chaldeans played only a subordinate part in this great rebellion, and hence could not well be regarded as the special agents in relieving Judah from the pressure of the Assyrian power.

There is only one other period in which, so far as our knowledge of the history will permit us to reach any conclusion, the conditions of our problem are met, and that is the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B. C. The horrors of that invasion, as they are indicated in the Scriptures and more fully outlined in Sennacherib's own annals, cannot be overstated. His record has become so familiar that it is only necessary to refer to it. In such a time this prophecy with its passionate earnestness might well have arisen. As we read the words of Habakkuk, we can see the stricken nation quivering under the lash of the cruel invader, just as it must have done when Sennacherib so humiliated it.

Again, it was just at this period in the history that the Chaldeans were more prominent than they seem to have been at any later time until they came forward to claim their share in the disintegrating Assyrian empire. The recent investigations of the Assyriologists have shown us that the Chaldeans first appear on the coast of the Persian Gulf about 1000 B. C., and from that time until their final conquest of Babylon and the establishment of the neo-Babylonian empire they were a constant

thorn in the side of Babylonians and Assyrians. But it was just at the close of the eighth century that their activity was especially marked. Merodach Baladan, a Chaldean chieftain, succeeded in maintaining himself as king of Babylon for a whole decade, from 720 until 709, when he was defeated by Sargon and forced to retire into Southern Babylonia. But when Sargon had been succeeded on the throne of Assyria by his son Sennacherib, we find Merodach Baladan once more coming to the front, this time probably inducing other dependencies of Assyria to join him in his rebellion. Among these dependencies must be included most of the little Palestinian principalities, with Hezekiah of Judah as their leader. Sennacherib's first act was to subdue Merodach Baladan, and then in the year 701 he turned his attention to Palestine, and in the course of the punishment of his rebellious subjects he inflicted upon Judah those crushing blows the records of which are preserved to us both in the Scriptures and in the Assyrian annals. But his campaign did not result as such campaigns of Assyrian monarchs usually ended. Though he shut up Hezekiah "in his royal city of Jerusalem like a bird in a cage," yet he did not capture the city, but was forced to raise the siege. The Assyriologists have brought to light the explanation of this strange act. While Sennacherib was occupied in the West, another great uprising in Babylonia occurred, in which all Babylon united its forces with those of the Chaldeans under Merodach Baladan in one desperate attempt to throw off the Assyrian yoke.¹³ This deliverance from the imminent danger through the report which came to Sennacherib of the uprising in Babylonia predicted by the prophet Habakkuk is identical with that mentioned by Isaiah, when in the name of Jehovah he said: "Be not afraid of the words . . . wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him and he shall hear a

¹³ WINCKLER, *K.A.T.*³, p. 80. The date of Hezekiah's sickness and the embassy of Merodach Baladan to Jerusalem (2 Kings, chap. 20; Isa., chaps. 38, 39), cannot be given with certainty. Notwithstanding the weight of the authorities on the other side, it still seems most likely that this event is to be placed after the accession of Sennacherib to the throne of Assyria, probably about 702; cf. ROGERS, *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, Vol. II, pp. 187, 188.

rumor (report) and shall return to his own land" (2 Kings 19:6, 7; Isa. 37:6, 7).

The great destruction of Sennacherib's army by the "angel of Jehovah," probably through some form of pestilence, must, then, be regarded as having taken place at a later date in connection with an invasion of Arabia and Egypt on the part of the Assyrian monarch. There are many strong arguments in favor of this view, one of them being that the biblical narrative refers to Tirhakah as engaged equally with Hezekiah in the attempt to oppose Sennacherib, and it is now known that Tirhakah did not come to the throne in Egypt until about 691.¹⁴ This view that Sennacherib made two expeditions to the West, and that his famous siege of Jerusalem occurred on the first expedition, while the marvelous destruction of his army is to be placed on the second, seems to have been first suggested by the Rawlinsons in their edition of Herodotus.¹⁵ Severely criticised and rejected by Schrader,¹⁶ it seems to have passed into forgetfulness until it was revived and elaborated by Winckler.¹⁷ It has been adopted by Guthe,¹⁸ Hommel,¹⁹ J. V. Prašek,²⁰ and W. E. Barnes,²¹ and is rejected by McCurdy,²² Rogers,²³ and Paton.²⁴ On this theory the most serious difficulties in the way of harmonizing the biblical records disappear, and the discrepancy supposed to be created by the mention of Tirhakah, as already stated, vanishes.

Having ascertained something of the actual course of events in connection with the siege of Jerusalem, we are better pre-

¹⁴ So MÜLLER, *Ency. Bib.*, Vol. II, col. 1245; CRUM in HASTINGS'S *Dict. Bib.*, Vol. I, p. 663, gives 690.

¹⁵ RAWLINSONS, *Herodotus*³, 1875, Vol. I, pp. 485-7.

¹⁶ *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, Vol. I, pp. 305, 306.

¹⁷ *Alltest. Untersuchungen*, pp. 26 ff.; *Geschichte Israels*, Vol. I, pp. 97, 98.

¹⁸ *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, pp. 203-5; art. "Israel" in *Ency. Bib.*, Vol. II, col. 2244.

¹⁹ Art. "Assyria" in HASTINGS'S *Dict. Bib.*, Vol. I, p. 188.

²⁰ *Expository Times*, Vol. XII, pp. 225 ff.; 405 ff. See also PRAŠEK'S elaborate discussion, the first part of which has just appeared in *Mittheilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft* (1903), pp. 113 ff.; and F. PEISER, "Der Prophet Habakkuk," *ibid.*, pp. 1-38. Also add BUDGE, *History of Egypt*, Vol. VI, pp. 135-52, 191-95, to the list of the supporters of the second expedition of Sennacherib to the West.

²¹ *Churchman's Bible*, Isa. 1-39.

²³ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 203, 204.

²² *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 239.

²⁴ *Syria and Palestine*, pp. 257-61.

pared to understand the significance of Habakkuk. As we interpret the prophecy and understand the history, Habakkuk was an associate of Isaiah in this great crisis of Jewish history, and just at the time when Isaiah was so vigorously asserting that Jerusalem should not fall into the hands of the Assyrians, Habakkuk comes forward with a similar assurance. And one of the means of deliverance which Isaiah hinted at as a rumor or report, Habakkuk declares positively to be the Chaldean uprising. Our view that Habakkuk is a pupil and associate of Isaiah furnishes the most satisfactory explanation of the remarkable similarity in thought and diction between his prophecy and many of the utterances of Isaiah. This similarity has been emphasized by Budde, especially as against Rothstein,²⁵ who has sought to maintain his thesis of the later date for the prophecy by citing parallels with Jeremiah. The parallels with Isaiah are numerous and striking, and cover practically the whole of the first and second chapters of the prophecy. With Habakkuk's description of the Chaldeans may be compared Isaiah's early account of the Assyrian army.²⁶ Habakkuk's conception of the Assyrians as the instrument in Jehovah's hands for reproof and correction is the same as that of Isaiah, and there is wonderful similarity in their descriptions of the real attitude of the Assyrians.²⁷ Furthermore, the song put by Habakkuk into the mouth of the delivered nations finds a parallel in the woes which Isaiah pronounces upon his own sinful nation, and even more closely in the song which Isaiah composed at the death of an Assyrian oppressor, probably Sargon.²⁸ Again, Habakkuk is, in part at least, a pupil of Isaiah in his theological and religious conceptions. They both had much the same concep-

²⁵ *Studien und Kritiken* (1894), pp. 51 ff.

²⁶ Hab. 1:5-10; Isa. 5:26-8.

²⁷ Hab. 1:126; Isa. 7:20; Hab. 1:11, 15-17, 2:5-8; Isa. 10:6-15; 14:24-7.

²⁸ Hab. 2:6-20; Isa. 5:8-24; 10:1-4, and especially 14:4-21. This interpretation of Isa. 14:4-21 has been set forth fully by WINCKLER, *Geschichte Israels*, Vol. I, p. 183, *Altor. Forschungen*, Series I, pp. 193, 194; by COBB, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XV, pp. 18-35. It seems to have been adopted by BARNES, *Churchman's Bible*: Isa. 1-39. It has not as yet won general acceptance, but it is probably correct. Winckler's final view that the reference is to Sargon seems more probable than the reference to Sennacherib.

tion of Jehovah;²⁹ both held to the inviolability of Jerusalem at the time of the siege and urged their fellow-citizens to assume an attitude of quiet trust in their God, and both predicted the withdrawal and ultimate overthrow of the tyrant.³⁰ We miss, it is true, the condemnation of the sin of his own people which is always so prominent in Isaiah's teaching, but when we recall that in all probability Habakkuk's brief prophecy was uttered in the face of a definite emergency, and at a time when the city of Jehovah seemed on the point of falling into the hands of blasphemous idolaters, this omission is not strange. And furthermore, notwithstanding the denunciations of Isaiah, and indeed, in part at least, in consequence of his strong efforts to secure reform, there was no time in the century preceding the reforms of Josiah when the term "righteous" could so fittingly be applied to Judah as in the reign of Hezekiah, who unquestionably introduced moral and ceremonial reforms of considerable importance.³¹

We might conclude our discussion at this point and submit our arguments in the hope that they are at least strong enough to lead to a reconsideration of the question as to the occasion and date of the prophecy. But inasmuch as we have suggested a new theory, it is only fair to ask how the third chapter is related to our theory. It is true that the third chapter is now generally denied to Habakkuk, and that largely because it belongs to the Psalm literature. This prayer is unquestionably a psalm, and it is not improbable that at one time it had its place in a collection of psalms and was used as a hymn in the public worship of temple or synagogue. Its title "a prayer" is found in the titles of several of the psalms. It is also provided with certain notes, indicating perhaps the kind of music to which it was to be

²⁹ Hab. 1:12a; 2:18-20; Isa. 2:18-21.

³⁰ Hab. 2:4b; Isa. 30:15. See further Hab. 2:2; Isa. 8:1-4; 30:8; Hab. 2:1-3; Isa. 8:16, 17.

³¹ It is true that these reforms are denied by many recent authorities, but the arguments do not seem to us convincing. The biblical account of Hezekiah's reforms furnishes the best explanation of the religious movements of the seventh century. Cf. STEUERNAGEL, *Das Deuteronomium*, p. xiv, in "Handkommentar zum Alten Testament," edited by NOWACK.

sung and the instruments by which it was to be accompanied, and the word *Selah*, elsewhere used only in the psalms, occurs three times. And Nestle has very plausibly suggested that the explanation of the curious phenomenon that the psalm has a musical notation at the end as well as at the beginning is to be found in the fact that, through an error of the copyist the beginning of the following psalm in the collection from which it was taken was copied with our psalm.³²

But to recognize that we have here a psalm does not by any means settle the question as to the authorship of this particular psalm, except perhaps for those whose theory denies the existence of any pre-exilic psalms. Nor is it sufficient, as Kuenen³³ has done, to find an argument for the later date of this piece in the evident tendency to assign anonymous psalms in the Psalter to well-known authors, as the LXX does, especially in the case of Haggai and Zechariah, for we have here precisely the opposite and entirely unique phenomenon, because the tradition of authorship was strong enough to remove the psalm from its place in some collection of songs and give it a place in the collected writings of its reputed author. If there are pre-exilic psalms, the question becomes, in the case at issue, first, whether there is any satisfactory objection to the early origin of this supposedly pre-exilic piece; and, secondly, whether this psalm can be satisfactorily explained out of the same historical circumstance as the rest of the prophecy. Stade,³⁴ who was the first to assign the psalm to the post-exilic period, did so largely on the basis of the language and the thought. But both of these criteria are extremely precarious in the absence of any fixed external standard. The pieces to which the psalm bears the most resemblance in form and style are the Song of Deborah (Judges, chap. 5) and the so-called Blessing of Moses (Deut. chap. 33). The antiquity of the Song of Deborah is universally admitted, and few critics would deny that the Blessing of Moses is, in part at least, older than the time of Isaiah. We may

³² *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Z. A. T. W.), Vol. XX, pp. 167, 168.

³³ *Boeken des ouden Verbonds*, Vol. II, pp. 389, 390.

³⁴ Z. A. T. W. (1884), pp. 157, 158.

therefore say that there is no satisfactory reason to be urged against the early date of the psalm. And in the next place we see no satisfactory reason for denying its reputed authorship. Apart from the extended description of the theophany, there are few, if any, ideas in the piece which are not to be found in the preceding chapters. Here as there it is not the community speaking, but the prophet in his own behalf, and that of the God-fearing community to which he belongs. Whatever arguments against its composition by Habakkuk may have been valid on the prevailing theory as to the date and occasion of the whole prophecy, have no weight as against the theory which we have been endeavoring to set forth. At the close of the seventh century, prophecy was seeking to lead people to submit to the inevitable catastrophe. We have to go back to the close of the eighth century to find the confident note which runs throughout this prayer; that no matter how dark the present is or how hopeless the future may seem, yet it is the purpose of Jehovah to deliver and not to destroy his sanctuary. The marvelous deliverance of Jerusalem undoubtedly called forth many psalms of praise, and it seems most reasonable that during the dark days of the siege a man whose lofty faith could lead him to utter such words of hope and confidence as we have seen in 1:11, 12; 2:4, 5, 20, as he thought of the redemptive work of Jehovah in the past history of his people, should pray that once again, "in the midst of the years," at a date so remote from those early crises of Israel's history, Jehovah should manifest himself in his saving power. And just as his previous prayers have been answered, so now for the third time an answer comes which is so astounding that it fills him with trembling and dread; but yet he is enabled by the answer to exclaim: "I will rest waiting for the day of distress which is to come up against the people who are assailing us in troops" (vs. 16). The rendering of the word which we have translated "rest" is very uncertain. This is the translation suggested in the margin of R. V., and on the whole seems the most probable rendering of the present text. The rest of the clause may be translated as we have suggested, with perfect propriety, and it is certainly the most reasonable translation which has been

presented. It is essentially the rendering given by Wellhausen.³⁵ Thus rendered the verse indicates the character of the present distress from which the prophet has been praying for deliverance; it is an overwhelming invasion, and, as in the earlier part of the prophecy, so here, deliverance, however mediated, is looked for by the prophet as a result of the intervening and saving power of Jehovah. The distresses which are occasioned by this invasion are graphically described in the following verse. If there were no other reference to an invasion, one might conclude, with Davidson,³⁶ that the allusion here is to the misery occasioned by "severe natural calamities;" but when the invasion has already been mentioned, what more natural interpretation could be suggested for these striking words than to suppose that the effects of the invasion are being described? And how well these allusions apply to the state of affairs brought about by the invasion of Sennacherib needs only to be stated to be appreciated. The prophet-psalmist as he prayed was looking out from his watch-tower upon a land which the Assyrian army was literally stripping bare. But in the midst of this present misery he is again convinced that Jehovah will deliver his people, and in consequence he is able to look beyond the gloomy present, and to break out into the sublime words of confident praise with which the psalm closes.

We conclude that there is no incongruity in language or style, in thought or circumstances, between the psalm and the rest of prophecy, and furthermore that the circumstances from which we have supposed the rest of the prophecy to arise furnish exactly the occasion which we should expect would give rise to a psalm like this. We maintain, therefore, that the psalm is from the same hand and brain as the rest of the prophecy.³⁷

³⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 36.

³⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 93.

³⁷Two articles on the subject which have recently appeared deserve mention. One is the article by STEVENSON in the *Expositor*, May, 1902, already referred to, and the other is by KELLY, "The Strophic Structure of Habakkuk," *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, Jan. 1902, pp. 94-119.